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The Art of Verse Making

BY

MODESTE HANNIS JORDAN

(Editor The Writer's Bulletin)

WITH INTRODUCTION BY CLINTON SCOLLARD



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*Where are the Poets, unto whom belong
The Olympian heights; whose singing shafts were
sent*

*Straight to the mark, and not from bows half-bent,
But with the utmost tension of the thong?
Where are the stately argosies of song,
Whose rushing keels made music as they went
Sailing in search of some new continent,
With all sails set, and steady winds and strong?*

*Perhaps there lives some dreamy boy, untaught
In schools, some graduate of the field or street,
Who shall become a master of the art;
An admiral sailing the high seas of thought
Fearless and first, and steering with his fleet
For lands not yet laid down in any chart.*

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

Art and the Poet.

By CLINTON SCOLLARD.

BEFORE the vision of every artist, high or low, if he be truly in love with his art, there glimmers ever the beacon-star of perfect achievement. With the sculptor, it is the example of a Phidias or Praxitiles; with the painter, the canvas of a Raphael or Murillo or Rembrandt; with the musician, the harmonies of a Beethoven or Bach; with the poet, the scope of a Homer, a Dante, or a Shakespeare. In a greater or lesser degree, in so far as in him lies, every devotee of art would follow such exemplars. How, he will ask himself, if he be really enamored of the high desire, can I attain nearest to the shining goal? Not only must I possess the dream, but I must also have the power to express it.

Little would it have been to Michael Angelo to have conceived his David had his hand lacked the magic to limn the vital form; naught would it have been to Titian to see in his imagination all the rich splendors that his

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brush portrayed had he not been endowed with the skill to make them visible; the melodies which stirred the soul of Liszt would have been futile had he not been given the faculty of making them audible; and all the Miltonic panorama of heaven and hell would have been as nothing had the blind shaper of this astonishing vision not been gifted with the grace of words.

Of all definitions of poetry there is none more simple nor more adequate than that of Poe, who calls it "the rhythmic creation of beauty." You may add to this, if you will, but here you have the core of truth. In considering poetry we are prone sometimes to confuse art with artificiality, or to confound it with technique. It has nothing whatever to do with the former, while the latter is but one of its potential parts. Thomas Bailey Aldrich wrote, in one of his most telling poems—

"Let Art be all in all," one time I said,
And straightway stirred the hypercritical
gall;
I said not, "Let *technique* be all in all,
But *Art*—a wider meaning."

Art, then, concerns not only the ability to make beauty audible or visible, but has to do with the inscrutable soul of beauty itself. Declares the author just quoted—

The poet who breathes no soul into his lute
Falls short of Art; 'twere better he were mute!

And he goes on—

Who lacks the art to shape his thought, I hold,
Were little poorer if he lacked the thought!

And finally—

Disparage not the magic touch that gives
The formless thought the grace whereby it
lives.

Have we not here the crux of the whole matter? Sculptor, painter, musician, poet—all reach their highest attainment when to the loftiest conception they add its most perfect presentation. In lesser forms of art the same dictum must hold good. Barring his limitations, the minor poet may be as true an artist as the major. We should hesitate to compare Lovelace with Shakespere, yet there is as

undeniable art in that incomparable lyric, "Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind," as in any speech put into the mouth of the most doting of Shakespeare's lovers.

Versification is the vehicle of the poet—as harmonious sound, in another form, is that of the musician. It is a part of his art. It must not be disdained any more than the idea which it carries.

Leave to the tyro's hand
The limp and shapeless style—
See that thy form demand
The labor of the file!

exclaims Austin Dobson, paraphrasing Theophile Gautier. The poet who turns wilfully away from either form or substance "falls short of art." The expostulation of Mr. Dobson, in slightly different words, may aptly be reiterated—

O poet, then, forbear
The loosely-sandaled verse;
Choose rather thou to wear
The buskin straight and terse!

We can find no excuse for the verse-maker

who, either through perversity or carelessness, allows false rhymes to mar his stanzas. Best had he bear in mind that *art*, and not a fancied artlessness, endures. Neither can aught be said in extenuation of the one who leads the reader floundering through mazes of doubt and despair in pursuit of thought; or yet of another who, in a mad chase after novelty, tortures measure until it is measureless. New forms of art no lover of art would decry, but they must be *art*, or they will die like the fancy or fad of an hour.

It might not be appropriate for every poet to adopt *Ars Victrix* as his motto, but certainly it would be well if all bore in mind this indubitable fact, attested to by the ages, that "Art alone enduring stays to us!"





WHAT is poetry? The answer will come to this question as quickly and definitely as to What is Music?

Neither can be definitely defined.

Poetry and music are twin sisters, and both are too elusive to permit of capture and holding in mere words.

Like music, the poem must be rhythmical, always, not necessarily always rhyming, and yet when lines end in like sound the rhyming must be perfect, else the poem is faulty no matter how perfect the measure.

There are certain rules to be adhered to in the construction of poetry, and yet each poet sets out to attain his end in a different manner. Many find the metre to fit their verse after

the theme for the poem has presented itself, and to others the poem comes singing in its own measure and it is well-nigh impossible to change this—and it is impossible to any but the poet who has worked for many years at his art to make it conform to another measure. The melody sings itself to the composer, and the poem comes singing to the poet, in measure quick or slow—mysteriously fitting the theme.

After writing one or two or a number of verses it is often necessary to change the metre, for the very “punch” of the poem cannot be got into the measure in which the other verses, or stanzas, are written. And here comes the poet’s struggle. Often he grows impatient and declares he cannot do it. Perhaps he will put the poem away for years before he will

find just how it is possible to change it.

There are many light and lyric poems written "at a sitting," but the most perfect poems that the world has known have been much labored over. Truly of all workers in the world the poet works under inspiration. He may, of course, go about his task with method, not waiting always until "the spirit moves him," but he must be careful that his verses do not sound manufactured, mechanical, invented. The most beautiful poems are those which are spontaneous, flowing on as smoothly as music, and without a word that seems forced. They impress the reader as something that had every right to be given birth, ages old, perhaps, just waiting to be sung.

There is a measure to fit every

theme, and the most effective poem is the one told in fitting measure.

The poet must ask himself what it is he wishes his poem to convey—he must have a central idea and build around this. It is not enough to wander vaguely on about moonlight and flowers and streams and sunsets when he is writing a “nature poem.” These things are only employed to convey his **meaning**. He must ask himself if his poem is to be grave or gay, stately in measure or tripping, and then set about his work. There must be a **reason for being** in every poem written.

The poem with an obscure meaning may be wonderful in its perfect construction, every line may have its singing note, but if its meaning is obscure the poet has not succeeded in his task. A poem is not intended as a study in finely strung words. There may be

all the rhythm in the world, one may be caught by the very swing or beat of the metre, and yet the poem will be senseless; so rhyme and metre are not all that a poet must have at his command. There is the **thought**, the very soul of the poem.

THE LYRIC POEM

The lyric poem has for its core some emotion. But one feeling usually predominates in the lyric poem, though feeling of several kinds may be combined in the poem, love and grief for example, as in "Highland Mary."

Lyric poetry may be classified as follows: **Love Lyric, Sacred Lyric, Patriotic Lyric, Lyric of Grief, Lyric of Supplication, Lyric of Praise, Reflective Lyric, Descriptive Lyric, Battle Lyric, Lyric of Fancy, Convivial Lyric, Humorous Lyric, Society Verse.**

Songs, Odes, and Sonnets are also classified as lyrics. The Song includes the greater number of lyric poems and is not restricted to verses intended to

be sung, but may include all, or most, of the short lyrics except the Sonnet. This form of verse is characterized by brevity, and by simplicity in language and thought.

The Ode is longer than the Song and represents a more exalted mood, more complicated in metre and more dignified in theme.

The Sonnet is a poem written in fourteen lines, in iambic pentametre. (The Iamb is a metrical foot of two syllables, a short or unaccented syllable followed by a long or accented one). This metre was first used by writers of satire. Pentametre is a verse of five measures or feet. The Sonnet deals with a single idea or sentiment. Further comment will be made upon it later.

NARRATIVE POETRY

The Narrative Poem may be classified as follows: **The Epic**, a long poem with a heroic theme; **The Metrical Romance**, a long story in verse, often a love story; **The Metrical Tale**, of the same nature as the **Metrical Romance**, but shorter, and sometimes of a humorous theme; **The Ballad**, a short, spirited poem in simple style; **The Descriptive Poem**, which deals with objects instead of events, often embraces characters, but there is little action; **The Allegory**, which aims to teach a lesson, the characters and events having a double significance; and **The Mock-Epic**, or mock-heroic, which is a parody poem employing the grand style of the **Epic** applied to events of a trivial nature.

There must be in the **Narrative Poem** a plot. The story of the poem must be perfectly clear.

Now, the poet must be certain of what he wishes to accomplish through his **Narrative Poem**. Does he wish merely to entertain with a beautiful story, does he wish to tell of heroic deeds, or does he wish to set forth his opinions upon an important subject, teach a truth or enforce a moral? The purpose of the **Narrative Poem** must be very clear. It is a tale, and does not depend upon imagery to uphold it. If there are characters these must stand out vividly. They must be real. "Enoch Arden" is an excellent example of the **Metrical Tale**.

When the poet has finished his **Narrative Poem** he should ask of himself—having had in mind just what he wishes to depict, just what he wishes

to convey—"Is my poem clear, direct, concise; or is it obscure, tedious, verbose? Is it fresh, natural, or awkward, stiff and harsh? Is it, as a whole, melodious, musical, sonorous?" This is the acid test. The poem must answer one or more of these things to the perfect satisfaction of himself, and, furthermore, of the editor and the reader, if his work is to have that appreciation for which all poets long and strive.

Then, so far as description is concerned, "Is it graphic, animated, earnest, dignified, grand, sublime, strong, intense, impassioned, delicate, brilliant?"

Then there is the language of the poem, which must fit its theme. It may be simple or idiomatic, or it may be polished and ornate, or strong and terse. There must be the "eternal fitness." A simple character in the Nar-

rative Poem, no more than in the prose tale, will speak, if quoted, with the elegance of a plumed knight. This character will be natural even if he is found in verse. In describing simple scenes use simple words. In this way you create "atmosphere," and the reader is taken to the very scene of which you dream, or upon which you look. Be **consistent** in all your poetic work.

RHYME AND METRE

All poetry does not rhyme. **Blank Verse** has no rhyme sound at the end of the lines.

The law of **Rhyme** is: The last accented vowel, and the sounds following it must correspond, but the preceding sounds must differ. When the accented vowels do not correspond exactly the rhyme is not perfect. This does not offend the ear so much when the rhyming lines alternate, but the poet who is careful in his work will not let any such imperfection slip by, even though he may feel that the fault is minor and he will be excused upon the general excellence of the poem.

The simplest form of rhyming is the **Couplet**, two lines bound together by a rhyme at the end of the line.

The **Triplet**, three lines bound together by rhyming words, is not common.

When rhymes occur within the lines they are called **Internal Rhymes**. As this:

She laughingly bent her head and stooped
Where the bright, warm sun shone over
The moist sod that her light feet trod,
And picked a four-leaved clover.

The form of rhyming, as the metre, must be alike in all the stanzas. The first stanza sets the pattern, as it were, for all the other verses, and one should not be satisfied to do merely the more simple forms of rhyming, while not by any means attempting gymnastics in verse making—as has been said before, a poem must never have an **invented** effect. To merely be a wonder in construction would rob a poem of all its charm.

The stanza of four lines is the one most commonly used, and rhyming may be done in various ways—alternating lines may rhyme, or two lines may be without rhyme, the first and third being without rhyming words at the end of the line, leaving it to the second and fourth to strike the corresponding note.

The **Quatrain** has all four lines rhyming.

Edward Fitzgerald in his translation of Omar Khayyam employs the four-line stanza in an unusual way as to rhyming:

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The rose as where some buried Caesar bled;
That every hyacinth the garden wears
Dropped in her lap from some once lovely
head.

All alternating rhyming lines must be indented. The couplet must have all lines starting even; all rhyming lines, if running consecutively, must start on an even line, no matter how many lines there are.

The **Sonnet** is one of the most difficult forms of verse, and should not be attempted by the novice in verse writing. There are two types of the sonnet, the one in most common use being called the Italian or Petrarchan, the other the Shakesperian. In the former type the first eight lines are known as the **octave**, the last six as the **sestet**. The perfect sonnet is rare indeed, and it is seldom that the sonnet does not sound invented—it must be an inspiration, something that will not allow itself to be expressed in any other form than this. It must flow on, the expression of a single idea. [It is

suggested to the student in verse making who wishes to attempt the sonnet form, to study carefully the sonnets of Wordsworth, Keats, Rossetti and Longfellow for examples of the Italian type; those of Shakespere for the variety bearing his name.] Wordsworth's "Sonnet Composed upon Westminster Bridge: Early Morning," is one of the best examples of the metrical structure of a sonnet, as well as of the law of unity and thought, which latter is quite as important as the metrical structure. The rhyme scheme of the octave is restricted, while the sestet may rhyme in various ways, but not in couplet.

The young poet, or the one new in this style of literary labor, often feels that he has done a very finished piece of poetic work, and, handing it to the experienced critic, finds that his "feet

limp," that his metre is out of order. In despair he declares he cannot improve it—that he does not see where the fault lies. Then he may be told to measure it off, "beat" it off in time, as one might keep time to music. He then very readily sees wherein he has failed to produce a perfect poem, though the thought that it embodies may be of the loftiest and purest. He may claim his right to "poetic license," but "poetic license" does not allow him to take liberties with metre, though it may permit him—with limitations—to take liberties with words. (And let it be here noted that the poet of the day does not take as frequent advantage of this license as did the older poets, which is saying something for his painstaking efforts and his willingness to work).

Imperfect rhyme and metre mean

discord. Discord and poetry are incompatible.

There must be in poetry a regular recurrence of accented syllables. There will be the even beat, the swing to all the lines.

Kipling has a wonderful "ear" for metre, for rhythm. His accents fall just right, his measure is never halting or uncertain. His "Mandalay" may be quoted as an excellent example of rhythm, as easy and flowing as ever has been done:

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking east-
ward to the sea,
There's a Burma girl a-settin', an' I know
she thinks o' me;
For the wind is in the palm-trees, an the
temple-bells they say:
"Come you back, you British soldier; come
you back to Mandalay!"

Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay:

Can't you hear their paddles chunkin' from
Rangoon to Mandalay?

On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin' fishes play,
An' the dawn come up like thunder outer
China, 'crost the bay!

If in your verse writing, if your "ear" is not exact and does not tell you whether or not your metre is correct, and if your accents do not fall just as they should, divide off your lines in this way: Put a curved mark above all your unaccented syllables and a straight mark above all your accented syllables. You will find that your syllables fall naturally into groups, and these are called feet.

The Iambic Foot consists of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable; thus the "feet" of the verse are measured off in groups of two.

The **Anapest Foot** has two unaccented syllables and an accented. The **Iambic** and the **Anapestic** feet are often found mingled in one poem.

Another foot measure is called **Trochee**, and is just the reverse of the **Iambic** foot, having an accented syllable followed by an unaccented. Verse written in this measure is called **Trochaic** verse.

The **Dactyl** foot resembles the **Trochaic**, having an accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables. **Trochaic** feet are often found in **Dactylic** verse.

The **Pyrrhic** foot is composed of two unaccented syllables. The **Spondee** is composed of two accented syllables. Both are found in **Iambic** and **Trochaic** verse and are never used alone.

When a line is found to lack a sylla-

ble either at the beginning or end this incomplete line is called **Catalectic**.

The regular number of syllables in blank verse is ten in each line.

The pause at the end of the line of poetry, or within the line, is called a **Caesura**. Punctuation usually marks all pauses, but not always—the reader determines this as is needed to give expression.

In measuring all poetry the lines should first be read aloud, as only in this way can their real meaning and measure be brought out, marking the accents as they fall. \

Often one line in a poem runs on into another, there being no punctuation, and in reading but the slightest pause is given to mark the line-unit.

In giving the metre of a poem the number of feet to a line must be indicated as well as the kind of feet.

A line of one foot is called a **Monometre** line; of two feet, **Dimetre**; of three, **Trimetre**; or four, **Tetrametre**; of five, **Pentametre**; of six, **Hexametre**; of seven, **Heptametre**.

To describe the metrical structure of a poem, then, the kind of feet, the number of feet to the line and the rhyme-order must be given.

The old-fashioned hymn books always set forth the metre, C.M. standing for **Common Metre**, a four-line stanza, **Iambic Tetrametre**, alternating with **Iambic Trimetre**; L.M. standing for **Long Metre**, **Iambic Tetrametre**. H.M. is **Hallelujah Metre**, made up of four **Iambic Trimetre** lines followed by two **Iambic Tetrametre** lines.

The **Trochaic** measures are indicated by figures, 7s meaning seven

syllables, or **Trochaic Tetrametre Catalectic**; 8s and 7s meaning **Trochaic Tetrametre**, the alternate lines being **Catalectic**; 6s means **Trochaic Trimetre**, and so on, the figures in each case indicating the number of syllables.

DRAMATIC POETRY

There must be either **Comedy** or **Tragedy**, though there may be **Reconciled Drama**, which unites the elements of comedy and tragedy, a tragic ending averted, and the play ending happily. Shakespeare, of course, was the master of dramatic poetry. To this day none has taken his place in work of this form. The more modern writers have attempted from time to time drama in verse, but there is no notable success recorded, while the dramas in verse by Shakespeare are seen upon the boards over and over with unbounded success, in the case of some actors.

But there may be the shorter dramatic poems, of course, these to be found in magazines, if the longer ones

are now only found in book form and not upon the stage.

If the **Dramatic Poem** is historical, the poet must be well informed as to the history he attempts to present so as to make his scenes true, his characters true, his poem have that note of sincerity that must never be lacking in the dramatic poem.

There must be the central figure, and his groups so connected with this as to give unity to the plot.

The characters in the **Dramatic Poem** must be distinct, as life-like as in the prose drama. If they are vague your poem has missed its aim. There must be a definite place for your hero or heroine.

The usual metre of the **Dramatic Poem** is blank verse (which is explained as to metre elsewhere in these pages). This is varied by the caesura,

or pauses, by the substitution of **trochaic**, **spondaic**, or **pyrric** feet. The addition of an unaccented syllable at the end of a line, or following a pause within a line, and so on. Lyrics may appear in the drama, as Ophelia's songs in Hamlet.

The language of the **Dramatic Poem**, the style, must conform to the times and the peoples portrayed. Any inconsistencies in the **Dramatic Poem** are offensive to the reader. They stand out vividly. Prose may have its faults and hope to find excuse, but the faulty work in **Dramatic Verse** is unforgivable, for the reader feels that the poet should not have attempted such heights unless perfectly prepared.

WHAT TO READ AND STUDY

NARRATIVE POETRY, ITS VARIOUS CLASSIFICATIONS.

(Good Examples)

For the **Epic**, "Paradise Lost," Milton.

Metrical Romance, "The Princess," Tennyson; "Marmion," Sir Walter Scott.

Metrical Tale, "Enoch Arden," Tennyson; "Tam O'Shanter," Robert Burns; "Canterbury Tales," Chaucer.

Ballad, "The Ancient Mariner," Coleridge; "The Wreck of the Hesperus," Longfellow.

Descriptive Poem, "The Deserted Village," Oliver Goldsmith. The de-

scriptive poem dealing with rural life is called **Pastoral**. Good examples of the **Pastoral** are "The Cotter's Saturday Night," Burns, and "Snow Bound," Whittier.

Allegory, "The Faerie Queene," Spenser; "Absalom and Achitophel," Dryden; "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," John Keats; "The Sensitive Plant," Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Mock-Epic (or mock-heroic), "The Rape of the Lock," Pope.

LYRIC POETRY.

(Good Examples)

Love Lyric, "Highland Mary," Robert Burns; "One Way of Love," Browning.

Sacred Lyric, "Ode on the Nativity," Milton; "Crossing the Bar," Tennyson.

Patriotic, "Star Spangled Banner," Key; "Rule Britannia," Thomson.

Grief, "Adonais," Shelley; "Bridge of Sighs," Hood.

Supplication, "To Sleep," a sonnet, Wordsworth; "To the Night," Shelley.

Praise (to celebrate an individual or a class), "The Ship Builders," Longfellow.

Reflective, "The Choir Invisible," George Eliot, and Milton's sonnet on his blindness.

Descriptive, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," Wordsworth; "She Walks in Beauty," Lord Byron.

Battle, "Battle of the Baltic," Campbell.

Fancy, "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats.

Convivial, "The Mermaid Tavern," Keats; "Rattlin', Roarin' Willie," Burns.

Humorous, "Sally in Our Alley," Carey; "Duncan Gray," Burns.

Society lyric is verse that treats of society themes in a graceful way. Poems of Praed, Locker, Holmes.

As has been said in these pages, **Odes** and **Sonnets** and **Songs** come under the head of **Lyric** in verse.

SONNETS.

(Good Examples)

Those of William Shakespere, William Wordsworth, John Keats, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Milton.

ODES.

"Ode to a Nightingale," John Keats; "Ode on a Grecian Urn," John

Keats; "Ode on the Death of Wellington," Lord Tennyson; "Ode to the West Wind," Percy Bysshe Shelley; Thomas Gray's odes on "Spring" and on "A Distant Prospect of Eton College."

OTHER GREAT POEMS FOR STUDY.

"Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," Thomas Gray; "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," William Wordsworth; "The Blessed Damozel," Dante Gabriel Rossetti; "The Lost Leader," Robert Browning; "Philomela," Matthew Arnold; "The Shepherd of King Admetus," James Russell Lowell; "The Cloud," Percy Bysshe Shelley; "Days," Ralph Waldo Emerson; "Alexander's Feast," John Dryden; "The Wonderful One-Hoss Shay," Oliver Wendell Holmes; "The Sermon of St. Francis," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Shakespeare must be included in the poet's reading. The poetic fancy of

the great English bard is ever an inspiration, ever an incentive to work of the highest and best in the realm of poetry. The reader will make his own selections of the plays for study. To one "The Merchant of Venice" will have most appeal, and to another "The Tempest"—Ariel's song in this latter drama being one of the notable lyrics of Shakespeare.

FAULTS THAT ARE MOST COMMON.

Avoid the Emphatic Auxiliary, as in "The birds **do** sing," since this can never be anything but "manufactured."

The old-fashioned use of apostrophes is still common with many beginners in verse writing, and adhered to by some of the older writers. "Every," "flowers," and words ending in "ed" will be slurred by the intelligent

reader when that is needed to give the proper rhythm to a line. The substitution of an apostrophe for "e" in words ending in "ed" was at first made when "ed" was a separate syllable in words like "finished," "beloved," and so forth, and the purpose of the apostrophe was to show that "ed" was not to be pronounced separately. Writers clung to the apostrophe for many years—even Tennyson—fearing lest careless readers mar their lines by throwing in the "ed" syllable where it should not be pronounced separately.

The word that is forced in just for the sake of rhyming is the most unpardonable offense in verse making. Often it has small sense and fails to express a meaning clearly, or not at all. Forced rhyming can never be pardoned or overlooked.

There **must** be a reason for being in

every poem. In newspaper parlance, there must be a "peg" for every poem to hang upon. Modern editors have demanded the "punch" in poetry so persistently that the modern poet feels that he cannot indulge in mere whimsical wanderings of fine words strung together if he is to get his work into print. The vague poem which requires foot-notes to elucidate has long ago passed out of existence.

Prosaic expressions and unpoetical words have no place in poetry. If you have a choice collection which you just must use in writing, try to "work them in" when you are doing prose. Avoid cumbersome words. Tennyson's chief charm is in his simplicity of language.

Avoid stilted and hackneyed phrases. Be original in your verse making. And when you have finished

your poem **quit**. Do not sum up and tag a moral. If the poem has not conveyed your message as the reader has followed the verses, then it has failed. It is not a perfect poem. The tagging on of a moral was once permitted, though never truly liked, but it is not permitted to-day, not even in the work of the most amateur poet.

MODERN VERSE

The examples of verse that have been suggested as helpful study to readers of this little book, have been selected because they illustrate the form of verse which it is necessary for every poet to know, and not because they are poems that might be successfully imitated to-day. Indeed, the young poet is advised not to follow the old poets too closely—except as to being correct in verse construction. Fashions in poetry change, as well as fashions in prose.

The stilted style of verse has no place now. Editors do not hesitate to thunder against “preaching” in verse. The modern verse calls for a wide-awake, stirring, or beautiful theme—yes, there is once more a call for the

beautiful in poetry; nature verse, poems that breathe of the out-of-doors are finding markets.

The young poet is advised to study the older poets, classifying poems as has been pointed out to him, in this way becoming familiar with form and metre. After this is done, and he has **experimented**, imitating all he pleases in order to see just what he is able to do in the various forms of verse—from the brief and light lyric form to the sonnet, the most difficult form—not yet, of course, sending out anything with a view to publication—he should study the modern verse, not only that which is appearing in the magazines, but that which is being brought out in book form by the best publishing houses. In this way he will get an idea of what the editor and the publisher will be most pleased

with, and will thus learn what the public wants, for, though editor and publisher may fall under criticism at times in regard to their poetical judgment, they know what will **sell**, and thus their selections are criterions upon public taste and demand.

The extreme fashion in verse will quickly pass, as the extreme fashion in dress. Freakishness in poetry is an abomination to the eye and to the ear. The "Imagiste" style of verse, at this writing the newest and most absurd style that has appeared for a long time, contrary to all verse rule, lacking in musical quality, is hardly worth mentioning except that it points a warning to young poets to try not for something new but for something beautiful, which will be something lasting. One cannot take liberties with music without creating

discord. The same thing is true of the rhythm in poetry. Strive to have that perfect—not freakish.

In modern verse it is well understood that it is the spirit of poetry and not the letter that must be given. The literal poem is not pleasing. There must be a glamour, as it were, thrown about the real in poetry. It is not poetry, for example, to say that the tree is full of leaves and the wind waves the leaves. Let this sort of description remain for prose. But that Spring has whispered to the heart of the tree and the leaves have awakened, that the West wind on his way across the land bends and whispers to the leaves—this is the way the poet sees it, **feels** it, tells it.

The didactic, the “teachy-preachy,” is always resented in poetry—we will tolerate it in prose, pages and pages

of it, even books full, but it has no place in poetry. The poem is intended to charm, to please, to soothe. That is its mission—yes, and to comfort, too, and inspire.

The nature poet has all the out-of-doors from which to gather his gems. The late Madison Cawein must ever rank first among the nature poets of the present century. Clinton Scollard and Charles Hanson Towne are poets weaving with a golden shuttle catching up the sunbeams, the mist of the marshland, the swirling rain, the silver ribbon of a winding stream. "The stuff that dreams are made of" is the stuff of which the nature poem is fashioned.

A beautiful example of the nature poem is "The Garden Invisible," by Emma Kenyon Parrish:

There daffodils awaken
 To golden sheen and scent;
And by soft airs o'ertaken,
Like fragrant bells are shaken;
 Pale jonquils, dew-besprent;
There wave white tufts, like cotton,
 There glow young leaves, like wine;
Like lazule, amber-shotten,
Gleams larkspur, half-forgotten,
 'Neath betony's dark bine.

A mystic elm-tree covers
 One shadowed oasis.
Ah, look! a wild-bee hovers
Strange, luscious, purple clovers;
 My garden dreams, I wis.
And now the red sun painteth
 The pansy's velvet bars;
A lifting breeze acquainteth
Yon violet that fainteth,
 With newly risen stars.

Say not there is no garden,
 No radiant parterre.
Ah, rich their gold thighs' burden—

My bees—of nectar nardine
Its honeyed blossoms bear;
And in its verdure holden
My soul exults at will;
Shines there a glory olden
Than Hesper's trees more golden;
More green than Ygdrasil!

Clinton Scollard possesses the art of employing the beauty and charm of nature to broider a poem which in other hands might savor of the commonplace. And this is the art of the true nature poet. He can bring his country to his town; he can tell his story with a pen that one feels sure has been dipped, at least at some time, in morning dew.

In "As I Came Down from Lebanon" the reader follows this poet all along the way; he is in the sunset's glow with him; he views olive orchards and sees the distant city's minarets.

As I came down from Lebanon,
Came winding, wandering slowly down
Through mountain passes bleak and
brown,
The cloudless day was well-nigh done.
The city, like an opal set
In emerald, showed each minaret
Afire with radiant beams of sun,
And glistened orange, fig, and lime,
Where song-birds made melodious chime,
As I came down from Lebanon.

As I came down from Lebanon,
Like lava in the dying glow,
Through olive orchards far below
I saw the murmuring river run;
And 'neath the wall upon the sand
Swart sheiks from distant Samarcand,
With precious spices they had won,
Lay long and languidly in wait
Till they might pass the guarded gate,
As I came down from Lebanon.

As I came down from Lebanon,
I saw strange men from lands afar,
In mosque and square and gay bazar,

The Magi that the Moslem shun,
And grave Effendi from Stamboul,
Who sherbet sipped in corners cool;
And, from the balconies o'errun
With roses, gleamed the eyes of those
Who dwell in still seraglios,
As I came down from Lebanon.

As I came down from Lebanon
The flaming flower of daytime died,
And Night, arrayed as is a bride
Of some great king, in garments spun
Of purple and the finest gold,
Outbloomed in glories manifold,
Until the moon, above the dun
And darkening desert, void of shade,
Shone like a keen Damascus blade,
As I came down from Lebanon.

Orrick Johns, in his poem, "Second Avenue," which won the prize offered in 1912 through Mr. Mitchell Kennerley for the best poem of the year, published in a volume called "The Lyric Year," includes in the poem of the

city a wonderful bit of nature poetry. Mr. Johns, regretting that the lovely things of the wide out-of-doors cannot be for the swarming city throngs, says:

The gorgeous canvas of the morn,
The sprinkled gayety of grass,
The sunlight dripping from the corn,
The stars that hold high-vestured mass,

The shattered grandeur of the hills,
The little leaping lovely ways
Of children, or what beauty spills
In summer greens and autumn grays,

These are not gained by any toil
Of groping hands that plead and plod,
But are the unimpoverished spoil
Poured from the bursting stores of God.

The poem of considerable length, the narrative poem, finds little place

to-day, and the market for such is so limited, and now so well occupied by the already-known poets — Edwin Markham being foremost in verse of this kind—that the younger poet need hardly strive for it just now. The shorter poem, the lyric style, is the most popular form of modern verse. It is often said, and with much truth, that the haste and rush of the times prevents us from doing any leisurely reading, and even in our poetry—as in our music—the measure must be brief. We must quick-step along. A change will come, of course—is bound to come—for art will ever hold its own, though for a time obscured.

Louis Untermeyer has the lyric gift. A pretty love lyric, "Only of Thee and Me," by this poet, may here be quoted as a good example of song measure:

THE ART OF VERSE MAKING

Only of thee and me the night wind sings,
Only of us the sailors speak at sea,
The earth is filled with wondered whisper-
ings
Only of thee and me.

Only of thee and me the breakers chant,
Only of us the stir in bush and tree;
The rain and sunshine tell the eager plant
Only of thee and me.

Only of thee and me, till all shall fade;
Only of us the whole world's thoughts
can be—
For we are Love, and God Himself is made
Only of thee and me.

One of the most beautiful of song lyrics is "The Rosary," by Robert Cameron Rogers. This, set to music some years ago, is now beloved by many the world over:

THE ART OF VERSE MAKING

The hours I spent with thee, dear heart,
Are as a string of pearls to me;
I count them over, every one apart,
My rosary.

Each hour a pearl, each pearl a prayer,
To still a heart by absence wrung;
I tell each bead unto the end—and there
A cross is hung.

Oh, memories that bless—and burn!
Oh, barren gain—and bitter loss!
I kiss each bead, and strive at last to learn
To kiss the cross, Sweetheart,
To kiss the cross.

There have been many beautiful lyric poems written within the past ten years, as well as longer poems of strength and merit, yet one asks which of all, if any, will live? Is it that poetry has such scant encouragement that the immediate present is productive of so little that might be

called excellent, or is it that modern poets, unlike those of days gone by, are unwilling to sacrifice many comforts to art, and so are turning their attention to works more profitable? Is it not somewhat the duty of the editor and the publisher to encourage the art of verse making to the extent that fair price may be paid for such labor?

The American poet, when all is said and done, is nearer to a place of appreciation, nearer to wider opportunities than his brothers of some years ago. We have not been a leisurely nation, we have been more engrossed with commerce than with art, with making money and "getting ahead." But there now comes a pause, a noticeable pause, in which the American man and woman, stopping for breath, declare, "Money is not all," and turn to art, to

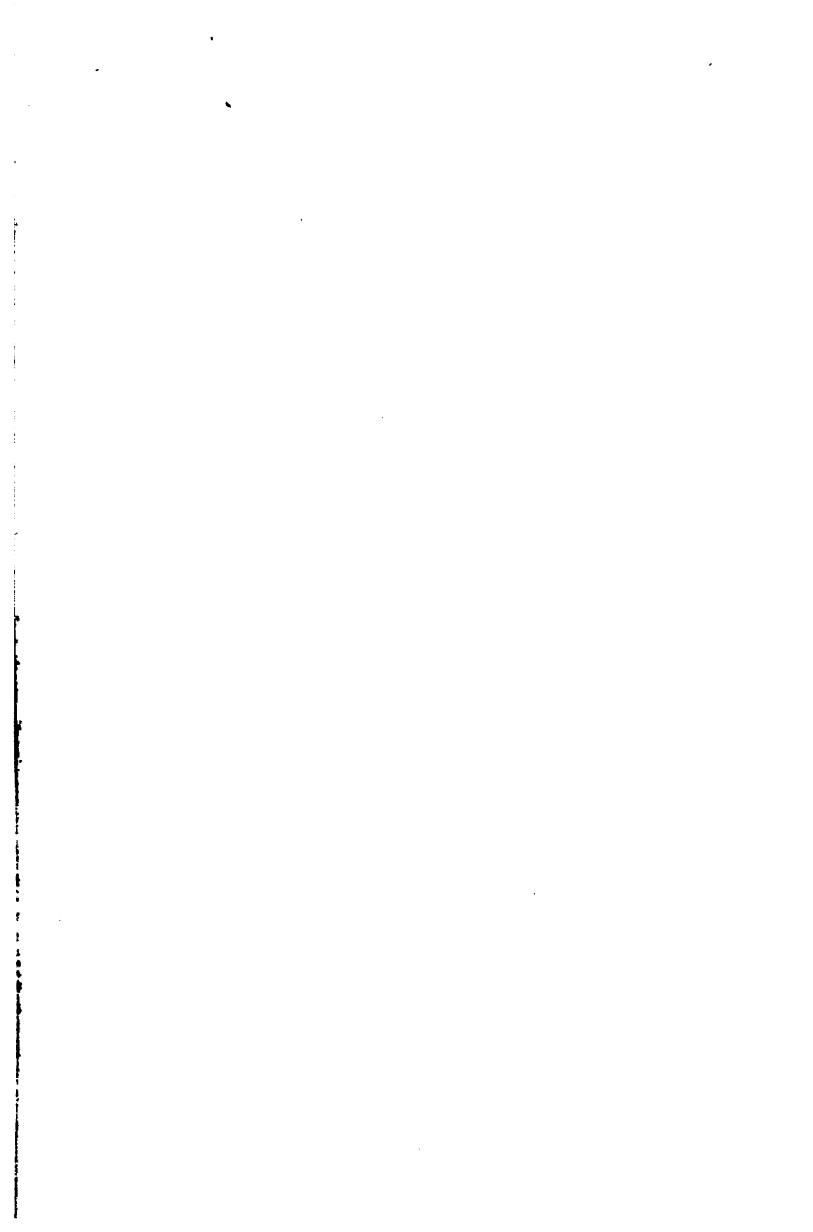
music, to literature for rest and recreation.

In presenting this little book to those who would produce good verse, verse that is not only readable but salable, the very sincere wish is extended that the young poet may keep to his ideal, may reach his goal by no other route than that of conscientious work, and may labor not to produce so much but to do so excellently.

THE
ART
OF
VERSE
MAKING

TO WHOM
IT MAY COME





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